

CONGRESSMAN SHERWOOD BOEHLERT (R-NY)
DESCRIPTION OF BILL FOR NASA MARK-UP
July 14, 2005

As I mentioned in my opening statement, we have reached a thoughtful bipartisan compromise, which is embodied in this Substitute. I want to thank everyone who helped put together this compromise over many hours of negotiation, including the staff on both sides of the aisle, and Tim Brown from the Legislative Counsel's office, who worked to get us the formal language back so quickly.

The principles behind this Substitute are the same as the principles that underlay the bill Mr. Calvert and I introduced – we need a multi-mission NASA with a balanced set of programs, and we need to move away from the current human space flight activities to implement the President's vision for human space flight.

This Substitute includes virtually all of the language that appeared in our bill, H.R. 3070, while bringing in many provisions from the Democrat bill. Because of the compromise, the bill will now provide more specificity about authorization levels for fiscal 2006 and 2007, will make those levels more enforceable, and will endorse a Hubble servicing mission, with the obvious caveat that it should not be done if the safety calculus changes. I think those are all worthy provisions.

The Substitute also includes several provisions that were lacking in the Democrat bill, perhaps most importantly an endorsement of the goal of returning to the moon by 2020. The Substitute also is less prescriptive than the Democrat version was about both the aeronautics program and the Space Station research program.

The thorniest issues in the negotiation were what to do about the current human space flight program. I have to say, this surprised me because the Station and Shuttle, which now account for about 40 percent of NASA's budget, eat up funds that should go to science and aeronautics, and to the President's vision – all stated priorities of this Committee's leadership on both sides of the aisle.

I think we've come to a reasonable compromise on these points.

On Shuttle retirement, the Substitute is silent, which allows the Administration to go ahead with its plan to retire the Shuttle by 2010.

That retirement date is essential to have a forward-looking space program. The Shuttle is a magnificent achievement as anyone who has seen it can attest. But as we learned again yesterday, it is also a hellaciously complex and balky piece of equipment, outdated in many ways, and certainly not as safe as one would prefer.

And it eats up a huge amount of money whether it flies or not. We have to move on.

As for Space Station, we all want to see the ISS used to the extent possible, given our investment in the facility. But we should be using it only to the extent that research could not be performed better elsewhere and only to the extent that ISS does not consume funds that could be spent more productively elsewhere. Those criteria significantly narrow the ISS research agenda.

The Substitute includes more direction about ISS research than does H.R. 3070, and specifically requires that some of the research not be directed at human exploration.

That's not what I would have preferred, but it's a reasonable compromise, especially given that, unlike the Democrat bill, the Substitute lets the Administration decide how much money to devote to ISS research.

So this is a true compromise. Both sides got some things, both sides gave up some things. What's important is the future the bill outlines for NASA.

The Substitute, in effect, endorses the President's vision, points us back to the moon, and provides the funding necessary to move ahead with the development of the Crew Exploration Vehicle. At the same time, the Substitute provides more funding for science and aeronautics than the President requested. And the substitute allows NASA to move ahead with its plans to gradually move away from its current human space flight programs.

In short, the substitute will give us a bill we can all be proud of. I look forward to working with my colleagues to preserve its key features in conference.

Thank you.